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Stakeholder perspectives on the implications of increases in tourism on local users of nature-based recreation settings in the Selwyn District, New Zealand

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Note

This publication is the second of three reports that address the implications of increases in tourism on local users of nature-based recreation settings in the Selwyn District, New Zealand and is intended to be read as part of that series. The first report (LEAP No. 51) outlines the literature and selected research methods while the third examines data gathered from an online survey of recreationists active in the Selwyn District.

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Executive summary

- This paper examines how the usual users of nature-based recreation settings in the Selwyn District, New Zealand, were responding to the increases in tourist number seen prior to COVID-19. Results of this research will assist recreation and protected area management planning to help gauge the responses of local recreationists to the changing tourism landscape.
- This paper reports on phase two of a three-phased research project examining how local users of nature-based recreation sites are responding to increases in the number of international visitors. The project's three main **objectives** were to:
 - explore how local users of nature-based recreation settings are adapting to increased tourism;
 - advance understanding of the pressures and impacts associated with increasing tourist volumes; and
 - develop a research methodology suitable for application in other New Zealand regions.
- Fourteen stakeholders involved with nature-based recreation in the Selwyn District were interviewed using **semi-structured interviews**. Interview participants were sourced from clubs, groups or organisations involved in outdoor, nature-based recreation within the study area; although in many cases participants held positions of responsibility within these organisations, they were reporting on their own recreation experiences.
- Findings suggest that the Selwyn District represents an area of **high recreation and amenity value**. Interview participants viewed the District as one which includes a range of terrain-types able to accommodate a variety of recreation activities and abilities.
- Interview participants observed **increased tourist and visitor numbers**, particularly in Selwyn sections of Te Araroa Trail, Castle Hill/Kura Tawhiti, Avalanche Peak, Arthur's Pass Village and Coes Ford.
- **Certain sites were avoided** by local users, either at particular times or entirely, due to crowding, which is at least partly attributable to increased tourist numbers. Spatial displacement was the most prevalent adaptive strategy employed; temporal displacement and activity displacement were also reported by participants.
- Participants viewed **tourism as generally good for the District**. However, disappointment was expressed about overseas visitors in particular on the following bases: **Behaviour**: including non-observance of backcountry hut protocols, lack of understanding around the nature of risks in the backcountry, and the issue of tourists getting disproportionate benefits from tax-payer funded resources. **Impact**: on both the recreation experience for local users, and the recreation resource itself, such as track degradation on Te Araroa Trail, and 'smoothing' of rock-faces used for free-climbing / bouldering.

- There was a **concern about overtourism**, but this was not viewed as a likely outcome for the Selwyn District in the near future because of the perceived **abundance** of nature-based recreation places in Selwyn, and consequential belief that there is **sufficient capacity** for more users. There was confidence that more users would have little additional impact on the recreation experience for local users in the short term.
- In light of increasing visitor numbers and the popularity of nature-based sites as tourist destinations, our findings suggest that local users of Selwyn's outdoor recreation sites **will increasingly choose to adapt** their own recreation habits to suit the new tourism landscape.
- Our analysis confirms that the perspectives of key stakeholders align with tourism literature suggesting that **tolerance for tourism decreases** over time, typically as visitor numbers increase, and in the absence of direct benefits from tourism.

Note: this study was undertaken immediately prior to the advent of COVID-19, the subsequent response to which dramatically reduced international tourism, and consequentially, the numbers of visitors to most outdoor recreation sites in Selwyn.

1. Introduction

Unprecedented tourism growth is placing pressure on New Zealand's natural resources as international visitors seek out iconic sites and scenic attractions often located in areas managed for conservation and public access. Many of these sites are nature-based and have been valued by generations of New Zealanders as places to visit and recreate (Devlin, Corbett, & Peebles, 1995). However, little is known about how the local users of recreation places are adapting to changes in visitor numbers. This study explores the implications for local users of nature-based recreation settings in the Selwyn District, New Zealand.

A multi-phased approach was adopted; phase one involved a desk-based search of regional tourism and recreation literature to establish what is known about the current patterns of visitation to the Selwyn District (both international and domestic), as well as exploring the literature to determine how this topic has been approached in the past and elsewhere. This research is presented in the first report of this series, entitled: The implications of increases in tourism on local users of nature-based recreation settings in the Selwyn District, New Zealand: A review of the literature and selected research methods. Phase two, reported here, involved interviewing key stakeholders representing a range of recreation activities in Selwyn. Phase three 'drilled down' into communities of practice of recreationists active in the Selwyn District using an online survey; the results of phase three are presented in the third report in this series.

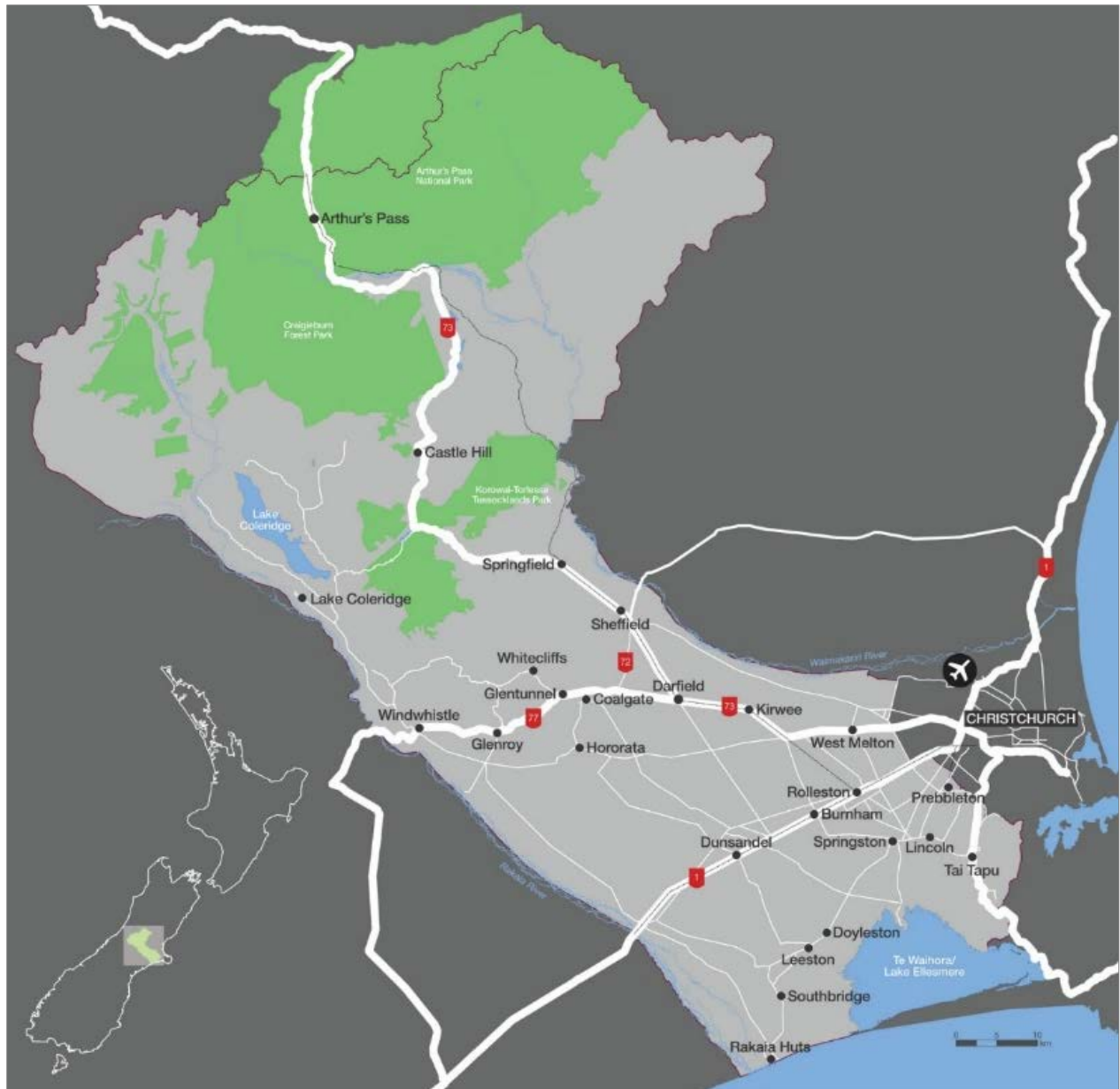


Figure 1. Selwyn District boundary, New Zealand (Selwyn District Council, 2019b)

The Selwyn District (see Fig. 1), located in the centre of the South Island of New Zealand, boasts a range of landscape and terrain types, from the mountainous inland areas of the Southern Alps, to sub-alpine hills and flat Canterbury Plains farmland cut with braided rivers and lakes. Many of these highly scenic settings have been the focus of increases in international visitor numbers, particularly at those nature-based recreation areas with unique visual appeal such as Arthur's Pass, Cave Stream and Castle Hill/Kura Tawhiti, all of which are adjacent to State Highway 73, one of the most popular tourist routes in the South Island (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2016). In addition, a section of Te Araroa Trail, a series of linked trails popular with international visitors that runs the length of New Zealand, runs through the Selwyn District (Te Araroa Trail, 2020) (see Fig. 2).

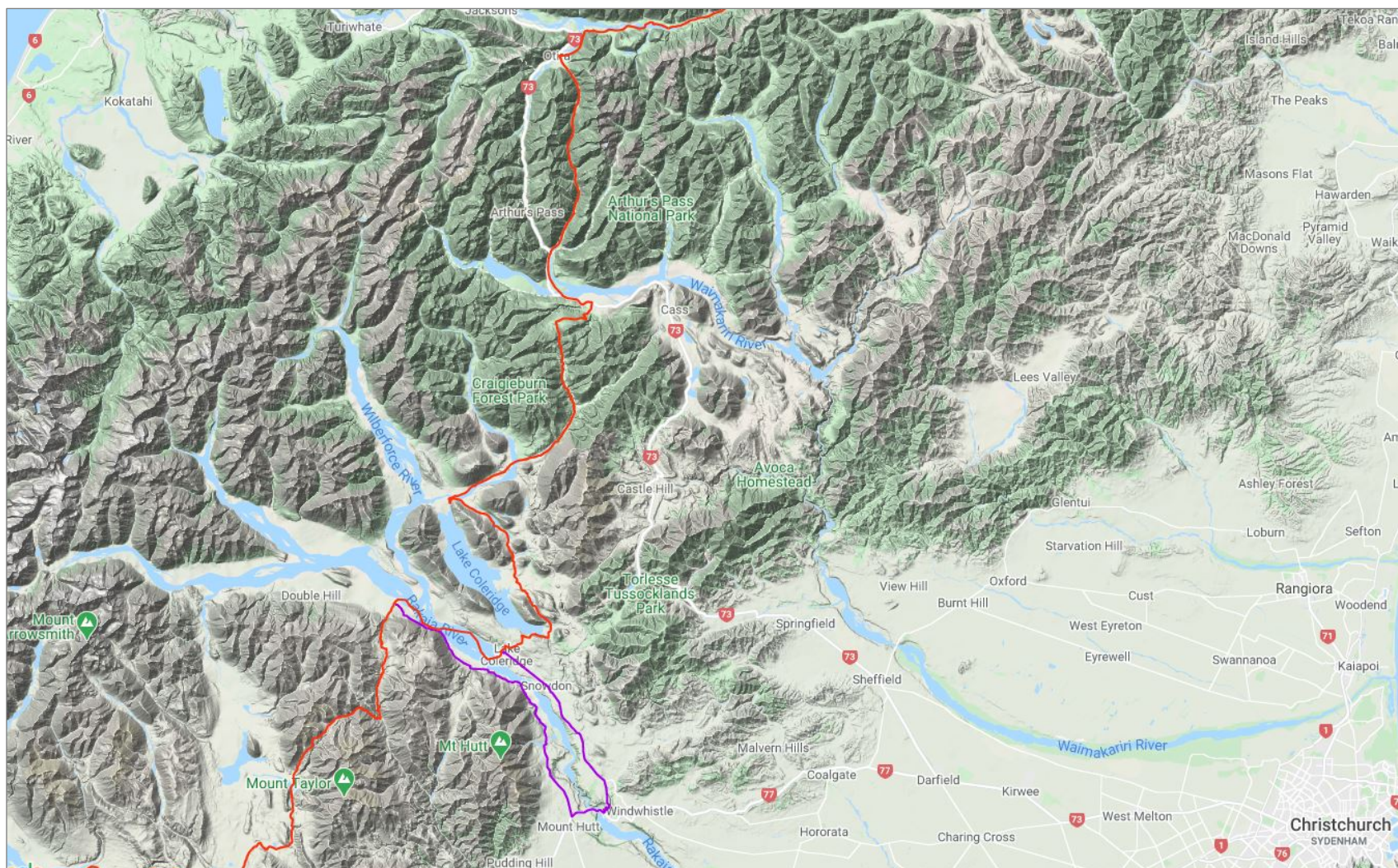


Figure 2. Te Araroa Trail through the Selwyn District (teararoatrail.org.nz)

The Selwyn District's predominantly rural population of 63,000 is concentrated to the south and east of the District, and a large proportion of residents are within commuter distance to the city of Christchurch (located just outside of the district) (Selwyn District Council, 2019a). Proximity to Christchurch, and its international airport, make Selwyn a popular thoroughfare for visitors, and a gateway to other parts of the South Island.

This report begins with a review of the relevant literature. For the full review, see the first report in this series. The brief literature review presented in this report first describes research on residents' attitudes to tourism, before outlining what we have termed 'adaptive responses', which include coping strategies, and recreation displacement. The project objectives are then briefly described followed by the methodology used for this project.

Findings are presented under three broad themes: Selwyn's nature-based recreation resource; perspectives on tourism; and adaptive behaviours. Illustrative quotes are included throughout. The report ends with a concluding discussion.

2. Research objectives

The primary objective of this research was to examine how local users of nature-based recreation settings are responding to increasing visitor numbers. The secondary objectives were to:

- advance understanding of the pressures and impacts associated with increasing tourist volumes: and
- develop a research methodology suitable for application in other New Zealand regions.

3. Review of literature

This section presents a brief review of the relevant literature found at the nexus of community responses to tourism and outdoor recreation. The first part deals broadly with literature in the recreation and tourism spaces, including some foundational conceptual models used to explain residents' attitudes to tourism. Second, adaptive strategies used by local recreationists, including the concept of displacement, are explored. Both international and New Zealand examples are described.

3.1 Attitudinal studies

Attitudes to tourism have been well-explored in the academic literature, particularly in relation to those of residents, or, 'hosts', whose lived experience is intertwined with those of the visitor. Several models have been developed which attempt to provide a macro perspective of residents' attitudes

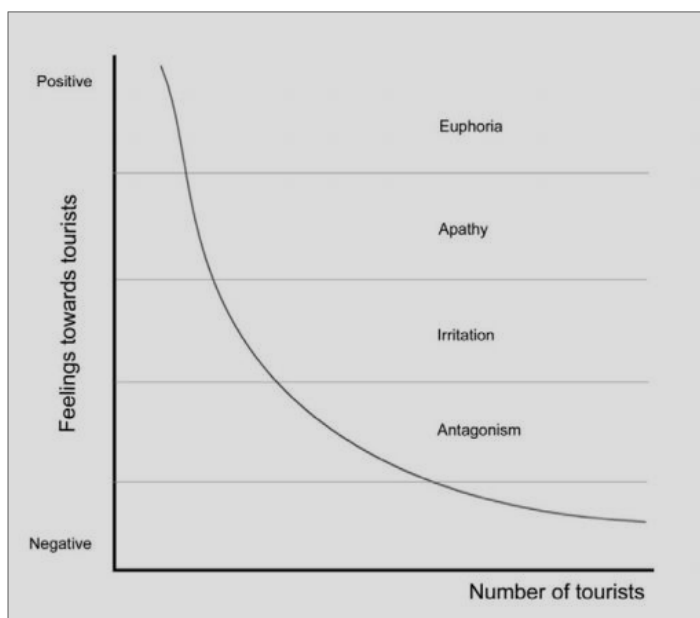


Figure 3. Doxey's Irridex (Reisinger & Dimanche, 2010)

to tourism (Vargas-Sánchez, Porras-Bueno, & Plaza-Mejía, 2011). Doxey's Irritation Index, also referred to as Doxey's Irridex (Doxey, 1975) represents a foundational example see Fig. 3). It describes attitudes towards tourism as on a continuum where positive feelings towards tourists reduce as increases in tourism and associated development are seen. The utility of Doxey's Irridex is evident in its application, and its ability to explain reduced satisfaction with tourism as exposure to its impacts increases.

However, its uni-directional flow does limit its ability to characterise the dynamic nature of resident attitudes. These are captured in an adapted matrix developed by Butler (1975). He postulated that tourism can take one of four prototypical forms depending on resident attitude measured along a 'positive-negative' continuum, and, on resident behaviour measured along an 'active-passive' continuum (see Fig. 4).

Mathieson and Wall (1982) suggest that the majority of the population will likely fall into the 'passive' categories, silently accepting tourism and its impacts because of both the benefits it brings, and because they have no control over tourist numbers. The key contribution of Butler's (adapted)

matrix was the recognition that within any community, including communities of interest such as recreationists, all four forms of attitudes may co-exist. Much of the research on resident, host, or community attitudes sits within these two frameworks.

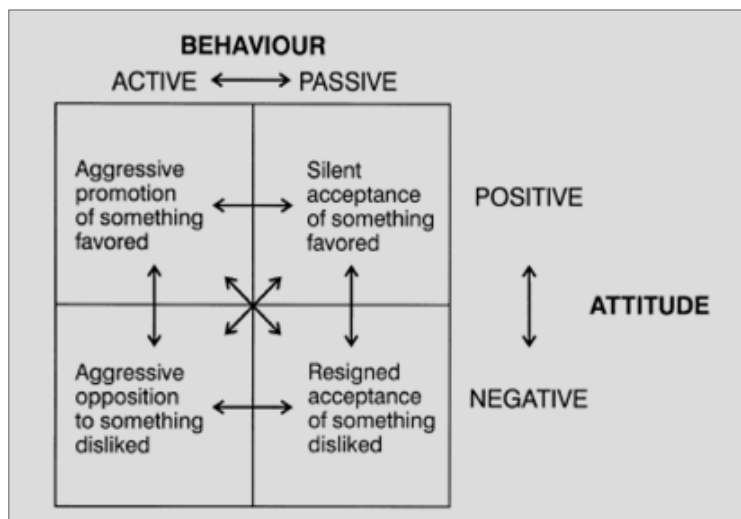


Figure 4. Host responses to tourist activity (Butler, 1975)

There is limited research from within the tourism corpus that specifically explores local recreationists' attitudes to tourism. Similarly, outdoor recreation research with a focus on the impacts of tourism is also lacking. The most relevant literature includes that around tourism in natural, rural, wilderness, or protected areas (Hall & Page, 2002) – where many outdoor recreation activities take place, and, that of the impact of tourism on

leisure or recreation related facilities. On the latter topic several studies have found that residents were pleased with observable increases in leisure and recreation facilities (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Liu & Var, 1986; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1990; Tovar & Lockwood, 2008), and, community facilities (Jaafar, Ismail, & Rasoolimanesh, 2015) attributable to tourism. Unfortunately, the specific nature of recreation and other facilities is rarely defined in these studies, leading to comparability issues. There is consensus in the literature that support for tourism is frequently based on residents' belief that there will be benefits to the local economy, primarily due to local employment opportunities (Tovar & Lockwood, 2008). In addition, it is worth noting that studies frequently reference the concepts of resident/host perceptions, attitudes, and opinions interchangeably. This concentration of research on perceptions and attitudes to tourism has come at the expense of research on responses to tourism (Sharpley, 2014). In addition, emphasis on the attitudes of residents has resulted in a scarcity of perspectives from other groups, such as key recreation user groups.

New Zealand-specific research on tourism's impact on recreation is also sparse and variable. However, several bibliographies and syntheses of New Zealand outdoor recreation literature have been compiled (Booth & Mackay, 2007; Department of Conservation, 1996; Devlin et al., 1995; Lovelock, Farminer, & Reis, 2011; Peebles, 1995; Sport NZ, 2017), the findings of which highlight two areas where further study is warranted. These studies saw a scarcity in both longitudinal studies, and, studies which take a macro, rather than case-specific, view of outdoor recreation. Indeed, the previous publication in this series found that there is an abundance of site- and time-specific

research on popular tourist areas of high recreation value or demand, including Aoraki/Mt. Cook (Thompson-Carr, 2012; Wilson, Purdie, Stewart, & Espiner, 2015), and South Westland's glaciers (Wilson, Espiner, Stewart, & Purdie, 2014). This is consistent with Sharpley's (2014) comprehensive review of research on host perceptions of tourism which was found to be largely case-study-based and typically quantitative. In addition, general outdoor recreation research has emphasised sustainability and patterns of use, and is focussed on particular settings including: mountainous areas (Booth & Cullen, 2001); protected areas (Strickland-Munro, Allison, & Moore, 2010; Wray, 2009; Wray, Espiner, & Perkins, 2010); backcountry areas (Kearsley & Coughlan, 1999; Visser, 1995); forests (Pan & Ryan, 2007); and New Zealand's conservation lands and waters, including Department of Conservation (DOC) walks (Booth, Cessford, McCool, & Espiner, 2011; Cessford, 2000; Sharpe, 1999).

New Zealand research that does note issues at the intersection of recreation and tourism often does so tangentially. McKay (2006) conducted comprehensive research into the social (and other) impacts of visitors to one nature-based recreation setting (the Mingha-Deception Track in Arthur's Pass National Park), while Wray's (2009) doctoral thesis, examined wilderness recreation (reporting, amongst other insights, that wilderness users have distinct expectations for their recreation experience and that these are easily disrupted by the presence of visitors who they perceived as different). Lastly, Wilson and Mackay (2015) examined the perspectives of residents and holiday-home owners in the rural town of Otematata, where findings showed that while residents and home-owners alike perceived the nearby Alps to Ocean (A2O) cycle trail as beneficial (e.g., to bring increased economic activity to the town from both international and domestic visitors using the trail), holiday home owners were more likely to report support for the trail because of anticipated personal use.

In addition to research reporting the benefits to residents of tourism, there are a slew of studies reporting resident displeasure with tourism's impacts on their towns. Voiced objections to tourism in New Zealand are largely on the basis of 'overtourism', a concept which describes "destinations where hosts or guests, locals or visitors feel that there are too many visitors and that the quality of life in the area, or the quality of the experience has deteriorated unacceptably" (Goodwin, 2017, p. 1). Although the negative impacts of overtourism are acknowledged as unevenly distributed in spatial terms, popular press reports that the wellbeing of New Zealanders is at stake due to increases in tourist numbers (Roy, 2019), and that local dissatisfaction with tourist crowding is high (Higgins, 2017; New Zealand Herald, 2018). In relation to public conservation lands and waters, research has shown that some local recreation users can perceive international visitors negatively, on a scale from benign resentment to thinly veiled hostility (Wray et al., 2010). The Great Walks

(Booth et al., 2011) and New Zealand's backcountry (Kearsley & Coughlan, 1999; Visser, 1995) have been the focus of early research seeking to understand the impacts of tourism increases in New Zealand's outdoor recreation contexts. More recently, there have been growing concerns that the environmental management standards that apply to other sectors are not applied as stringently to the tourism sector (Higham, Espiner, & Parry, 2019). Given the importance to the tourism sector of sustaining a social licence (that is, the support of local communities), continuing to monitor attitudes to tourism would seem prudent. New Zealand's national tourism industry body, Tourism Industry Aotearoa, together with the crown entity responsible for marketing New Zealand as a destination, Tourism New Zealand, report annually on the 'Mood of the Nation' to track New Zealanders' perceptions of tourism. The latest figures suggest that just over a quarter of New Zealanders "think that the current number of visitors is too high" (Tourism Industry Aotearoa, 2019, p. 2).

Due to the remoteness of many nature-based settings, and New Zealand's relatively sparse population, it is not unusual that resident outdoor recreationists expect minimal interaction with other users (Wray, 2009). So far as the array of factors that may prompt nature-based recreationists to adopt new or different patterns of behaviours, reduced levels of access to solitude is but one.

3.2 Adaptive responses

The adaptive practices used by outdoor recreationists in response to changing recreation experience conditions have been described as coping strategies (Robert E Manning & Valliere, 2001). These strategies can be subdivided into cognitive reactions (which deal with recreationists' internal processing); and displacement (in which behaviours are manifested physically). Displacement, an adaptive response involving behaviour change, can be temporal, spatial, and physical. All forms of displacement result in the recreationist changing recreation habits in some way, which, at sufficient scale, can have important social and environmental effects.

International research on displacement of wilderness users, although scarce (Schneider, 2007), tends to be site and/or time specific. Much like the research on the attitudes of recreationists, displacement and conflict research in relation to nature-based recreation is largely U.S. and Europe-based (Harrill, 2004; Perera, Senevirathna, & Vlosky, 2015). Iceland stands out as the setting for recent and relevant research occurring in this area. Iceland is a destination facing rapidly increasing tourist numbers, and one with a unique and distinct natural landscape. Sæþórsdóttir's (2004) research addresses the impacts of increasing visitor numbers on the ability of the country's highlands to provide the 'wilderness experience' that is sought by visitors. An associated body of work examines decision-making processes for tourists (e.g., see: Sirakaya & Woodside's 2005 review of the literature on this topic), and decision-making around the selection of sites for recreation (see

Lee, Huang, and Yeh (2010), and Hunt (2005)). Findings suggest that the decision to use a given site for outdoor recreation is dependent on a complex interplay between several factors including: the attractiveness of a site's scenery/landscape, access, weather considerations, and the likelihood of other recreationists being present (which, in Hunt's 2005 research pertaining to anglers, was a deterrent).

Displacement is necessarily linked with negative factors in the place of recreation, i.e., 'push factors' which encourage users to seek alternatives to their preferred place or time for their chosen activity. One factor influencing this is a person's familiarity with a place (and place attachment), which have been shown to have an effect on people's responses to changes in that place (Budruk, Stanis, Schneider, & Heisey, 2008; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004; Schroeder & Fulton, 2010). Research in this area has shown that impacts on an area are mostly felt by those closest to it (either by residence, proximity or familiarity based on frequency of use). An illustrative example of this is the 'last settler syndrome', a concept which describes the phenomenon whereby successive new residents (or users) of an area retain their first impressions of the place as the baseline of what is normal, acceptable or appropriate (Nielsen, Shelby, & Haas, 1977). The concept has been used in recreation, tourism and place attachment research to explain conflicts that arise over social carrying capacities, as well as place-use conflict (Groothuis, 2010). Its significance to recreation in nature-based settings is associated with displacement. Alongside displacement of long-time users can come the importation of 'new' users whose tolerance to aspects considered adverse by those displaced, are higher.. This has the potential to lead to the erosion of conditions in a place, as successive groups see only the current conditions and use these as the base level for comparison (Greenaway, Cessford, & Leppens, 2007). The last settler notion has also been referred to in the literature as the 'floating baseline effect' (Booth et al., 2011).

While a survey undertaken by Greenaway et al. (2007) found little evidence of recreation displacement in the New Zealand outdoors, the authors cautioned that recreationists' tendency to deploy rationalisation (a cognitive coping strategy that allows the recreationist to avoid disappointment when faced with less than ideal conditions) may obfuscate results. This suggests that further investigation is needed to explore the displacement phenomenon.

4. Methods

A purposive sample was sourced by way of an internet and online directory search of recreation clubs and organisations operating in Canterbury. People were initially contacted because of their leadership role within the given recreation community. This was taken as indicative of knowledge of both that recreation activity, and of club members' general use of the study area for this activity. At least one club or group involved with each of the following activities was approached: horse riding, tramping/hiking, walking, skiing, rock-climbing/bouldering, mountaineering, kayaking, 4-wheel driving, fishing, hunting/shooting, mountain biking, multi-sport or adventure race training, community conservation, and ornithology. In some cases the initial contact agreed to be interviewed, while in as many cases, the initial contact forwarded the interviewer details to a club member they thought suitable.

In total, fourteen people agreed to be interviewed (participants are anonymised in this reports, and are referred to by participant number, P1, P2, etc.). While some were acting as a representative for their organisation, it is important to note that others wished their contribution to the research to be limited to their personal experiences as a recreationist. All participants had an interest in the Selwyn District through extensive use or residence in the district; their association with the district ranged from a few years to over 40 years. A limitation of the sample is its exclusion of non-affiliated recreationists. The informal sector, particularly family groups, have traditionally been underrepresented in outdoor recreation research (Reis, Thompson, Lovelock, & Boyes, 2010). Similarly, in this research, the views of freedom campers, family groups and individuals whose recreation is solely undertaken on a casual basis are not well represented. It should also be noted that many of the interview participants were active in a number of different recreation activities. Consequently, quotes pertaining to one recreation activity cannot not necessarily be linked to any one organisation which undertakes that activity (see Appendix 2 for participants' outdoor recreation activities and the usual places they undertake these).

Interviews were all conducted face-to-face and typically lasted 45-60 minutes. Although the interviewer (the lead author of this paper) followed a semi-structured interview schedule, interviews were conversational in style. Participants were encouraged to share personal reminiscences, photographs, and memories related to the Selwyn District in addition to answering questions about where, how often, and their general experiences of recreation in Selwyn (see Appendix 1 for the interview schedule). To this end, a topographical map was provided to facilitate discussion and to allow participants to identify and clarify places of interest to them (see Fig. 5). During the interview, participants marked the map with places they use for nature-based recreation. These were

photographed and cleared after each interview, for re-use. The images below from participants P3 and P7 show a broad range of recreation places in Selwyn were regularly used. (See Appendix 2 for images from other interview participants.)

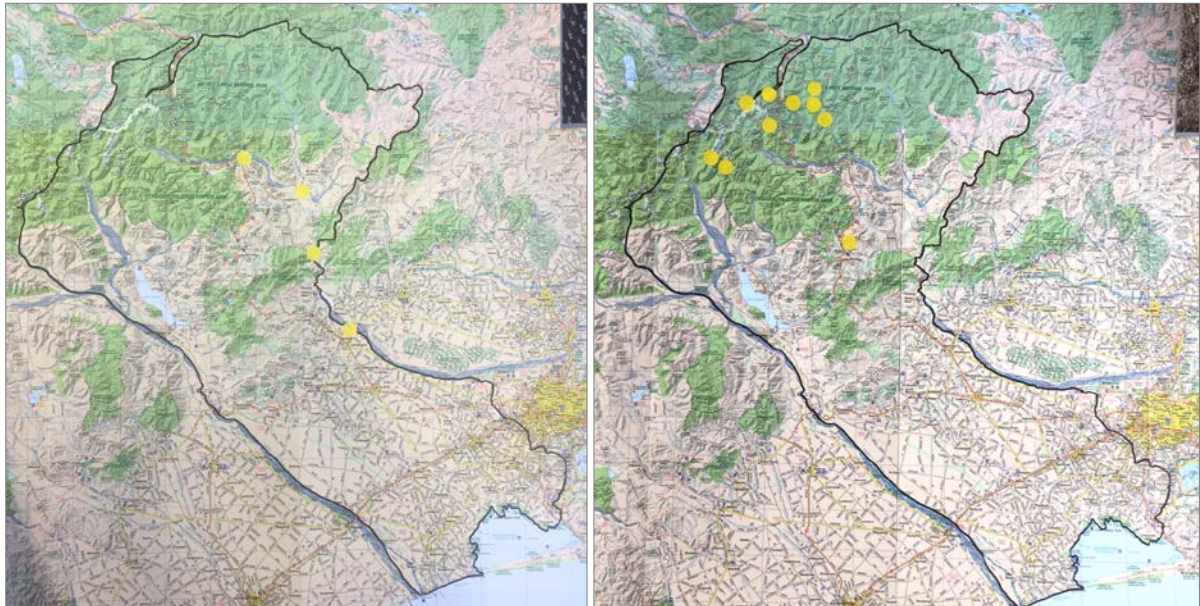


Figure 5. The Selwyn District showing favoured recreation places for P3 (kayaker) and P7 (mountaineer, alpine tramper, trail runner, and boulderer).

Use of photographs follows Clark-Ibáñez (2004, p. 1512), who noted that “participants can use photographs to provide a unique way to communicate dimensions of their lives”. Three participants used photographs to expand on their recreation commentary; these were typically landscapes viewed from places of recreation (e.g., mountain summits or hilltops), and were displayed to the interviewer on the participant’s own smart phone.

Interviews were transcribed and subsequently thematically analysed with assistance from qualitative analysis software, NVivo (QSR International, 2018). Initial and subsequent readings of the interview transcripts enabled themes to become apparent. Comments were broadly coded and then re-coded into topics and sub-topics. Broad themes for initial coding were those around tourism, nature-based recreation, and the Selwyn District itself. In addition, a series of word searches were undertaken to capture the number of times place-names within Selwyn were mentioned (this not only gave an indication of which places were popular in interviews, but allowed all discussion about these places from participants to be coded to, and therefore accessible from, one place). For example, Arthur’s Pass (National Park and/or Village) was mentioned over one hundred times in fourteen interviews, and featured in twice as many comments as did the next most mentioned place, Castle Hill/Kura Tawhiti (sometimes also referred to as ‘the rocks’).

5. Findings

The analysis of the data is presented in three sections, the first of which outlines the ways in which interview participants talked about the Selwyn District in the context of its nature-based recreation sites. The second section is focussed around interview participants and their impressions of tourism; and the third section presents participants' perspectives on their recreation practices and the ways in which they are adapting to the changing tourism landscape.

5.1 Selwyn's nature-based recreation sites and use

The nature of outdoor recreation places within the Selwyn District was commented upon frequently by interview participants. Even participants whose use of the district was measured in years rather than decades conveyed a sense of admiration for, and strong connections with, the area. The region was perceived to contain an abundance of nature-based recreation sites in or adjacent to areas of outstanding natural beauty. This, coupled with what was described as a relative absence of tourist attractions and accompanying infrastructure, was viewed as an asset. Due to the level of use that interview participants had of the district, the interviews revealed observations of change over time as well as articulate descriptions of current recreation practices in the district.

5.1.1 The character and extent of nature-based recreation sites in Selwyn

Interview participants spoke about the Selwyn District as an area with an abundance of nature-based recreation sites. Many people felt there was more than adequate space and that this would ensure a range of recreation activities have a future in Selwyn. People referred to tracts of wilderness as "vast" (P5), about there being "plenty more for me to discover" (P4) in the region, and of the areas around Arthur's Pass as "abundant with natural resources" (P3). Interview participants noted that, although there are several well-frequented sites such as Castle Hill/Kura Tawhiti and Cave Stream, there remain many nature-based recreation sites that are beyond both State Highway 73, and the immediate gaze of road users. The following quote describes the position of many interview participants on the options available for recreation:

Even within the village [Arthur's Pass] there are still options of choosing something that is pretty much identical in terms of the experience you have...If you go to Punchbowl Falls there are going to be people there...but for almost anyone there are so many options (P12).

Another participant spoke of Castle Hill/Kura Tawhiti, widely acknowledged as a popular site for tourists, and the nearby sites which offer a similar bouldering experience. "Sometimes at Castle Hill there seems to be 500 people for the day and then Flock Hill not even 50. Sometimes we were the *only* people there" (P7, emphasis expressed in interview). Similarly, a mountain biker who also

participates in rock climbing noted that “Even at Te Kura Tawhiti Reserve you can find your own solitude if you’re prepared to walk another 20 to 30 minutes” (P2).

The tone in the comments is significant, with phrasing suggesting that while there are “still” options, this may not be the case in perpetuity. Similarly, “even” at Castle Hill/Kura Tawhiti, a site characterised as by one participant as “honey-pot” for visitors (P2), and as “heaving” with tourists by another (P2), sufficient options are available to satisfy recreation needs. This sentiment was echoed by another participant who was speaking about outdoor recreation in general: “It’s not an infinite resource, but there’s still plenty of room for everybody” (P9).

The options for nature-based recreation were described as plentiful, and were admired for both their suitability for the chosen recreation activity, and the appeal of the location in terms of its amenity value. In fact, it was common for interview participants to display a sense of pride in the natural beauty of the Selwyn District. Participants talked about wanting to share, or showcase this with overseas visitors. It was equally common for interview participants to talk about wanting Selwyn’s nature-based recreation places to be used by people (generally) or to be used more by local residents. When talking about the Craigieburn area a tramper reported its popularity amongst recreationists; they stated they “*like* people going there” (emphasis expressed in interview), adding that it is a “stunning spot” (P12). Furthermore, one participant reported that it was only fair that these landscapes were shared with visitors, and, in relation to Arthur’s Pass National Park, “we don’t want to keep it all to ourselves” (P13).

5.1.2 Number of users of nature-based recreation sites

Selwyn’s plentiful options for nature-based recreation meant it was viewed as having the capacity to absorb growing numbers of visitors with little perceived impact on local users. This view was expounded by many interview participants, albeit to varying degrees. One tramper stated outright that:

It would take many years - a lot of years - of growth, you could probably double numbers there and still be kind of okay. Because I think it’s not quite so developed for tourists. Um, especially Craigieburns [sic]; even Arthur’s Pass (P12).

For most, however, current user numbers were characterised as tolerable, or, for some, at the upper edge of being tolerable. It is noteworthy that the two interview participants who displayed the most tolerance for current user numbers in nature-based recreation sites in Selwyn were citizens who had immigrated to New Zealand in adulthood. Following Budruk et al. (2008) and Higham (1998), these participants’ experiences of living and recreating in their country of origin are likely to have influenced their perceptions of what constitutes crowding in nature-based settings. The relative and

subjective nature of tolerance to people in nature is evidenced in the following quote from one of these participants: “even on a busy day, it’s quite quiet” (P7).

Keeping the subjective nature of perceptions of crowding in mind, overtourism was raised by several interview participants. The concept of overtourism is highly relevant to nature-based places, as well as the more heavily researched urban destinations in tourism research (e.g., European cities such as Venice, Paris, or Barcelona). Interview participants cited New Zealand and overseas examples of destinations in which tourism was perceived to have changed the area for the worse; these included Mount Cook/Aoraki, the Tongariro Crossing, Queenstown, and Wanaka. These places, along with the more general ‘Europe’ as well as Peru’s Inca Trail, were identified as places that are too crowded, even overrun, with tourists.

Examples of this in popular press abound; for example, reporter Sabin (2019), described “Dozens of people...all concentrated on a little spot on the beach” during a visit to popular tourist attraction Hot Water Beach in the Coromandel. Selwyn, however, was regarded by participants as somewhat of an underrated place, a ‘hidden gem’ so far as places of natural beauty are concerned, and its status as such was celebrated.

Commentary around this topic pointed to the commonly held view that Selwyn was protected from these issues. One person expressed this succinctly: “I think the Selwyn District’s really fortunate in the sense that I don’t think they’re ever going to be plagued by overtourism” (P8). Another stated:

I think Selwyn’s not as highly developed as, here for example, in Queenstown, or the Milford Sound, Te Anau and then Wanaka and those areas, I think they’re reaching capacity if not already at capacity or over capacity...both islands have got those issues. I think...Selwyn’s not quite there, luckily (P12).

People agreed that Selwyn’s apparent immunity to overtourism was due, in part, to the absence of iconic destinations and accompanying tourist infrastructure. This was described by the following participant: “It doesn’t have the same allure as like Tekapo or Queenstown or anywhere like that. So I think it’ll kinda be okay, probably for a lot longer” (P10). Notwithstanding the confidence of local users in their places of recreation being immune to overtourism, an undercurrent of reticence was present, visible in phrasings such as “there are *still* options” (P12), and it “doesn’t feel overrun yet” (P2) (emphasis added).

There was only one nature-based recreation site noted in interviews which had reportedly seen a reduction in recreation users; this was Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora. One long-time resident of the Selwyn District actually lamented reduced numbers using Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora. They recalled there being communities of windsurfers, small sailboat users and water skiers on the lake “40-odd

years ago” (P11), and that “there’s less people along the edge of the lake now [game bird] shooting than there was” (P11). In addition, other participants wanted to see more people generally engaging in nature-based recreation. A member of a conservation group stated that they would be happy to see Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora become a well-used tourist attraction, particularly if it meant the area were restored for all to use.

Interestingly, although Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora user numbers have reportedly declined, nearby Coes Ford has experienced a dramatic upsurge in users (Selwyn District Council, 2017). The riverside picnic and recreation area is a designated freedom camping site and, due to its proximity to Christchurch City and the lack of comparable sites, it attracts many international visitors as well as local users. One participant noted that “Regularly you’d have a hundred vehicles scattered around Coes Ford, and the biggest count I think we had was around two hundred” (P11). When asked their opinion on the types of users staying at Coes Ford, they stated “As long as somebody’s using it, that’s great. I don’t mind. And if it’s mixing up locals and tourists its fine. I hope they’d take the time of day to talk to each other” (P11).

The reported increased use of Coes Ford is consistent with reports from those using inland mountainous and/or forested regions within Selwyn, where increased use has also been observed. There was general agreement from interview participants that there are more people and more tourists in the Selwyn District now than in the past. Participants observed seeing more people, more cars on the roads, and more people in the nature-based settings where they carry out their recreation activities. One participant referred to international FITs disparagingly as “road lice” (P8). Such increases are in line with figures compiled by Statistics New Zealand showing increased visitor arrivals at Christchurch International Airport (Stats NZ, 2018) and increases in tourism spending in the Selwyn District (Stats NZ, 2017).

One participant discussed their surprise to find a relatively remote area in Arthur’s Pass National Park “just chocka [full]” (P6) with people. They described their experience of trail running and finding it “full of random tourists”. When asked to clarify what led them to believe they were tourists, the participant replied:

‘Cos they’ve got accents and not speaking English...you stop at a hut when you’re doing a 5-hour run to have something to eat, and you say “hi how’s it going” and, “oh you’re all German...what are you doing here?”. “Oh we’re doing the TA¹ Trail” (P6).

¹ The Te Araroa Trail is sometimes referred to as ‘the TA’ by users.

Similarly, other participants stated they had observed an increase in tourist numbers at specific locations in Selwyn, such as Arthur's Pass Village (and several nearby walks), and Castle Hill/Kura Tawhiti. One person stated simply: "I've seen an increase in tourists in that time" (in the 8 years they had been doing regular mountaineering trips there). Many displayed a level of acceptance of the presence of other users, as the following tramper did:

Avalanche Peak would be an example. It's getting more and more crowded. You always find other people on the top there, on a decent day, always. Um, I don't think I mind that so much, I don't, it's not at that level where it's a problem. I know what I am in for if I go there. (P12).

The final statement is revealing of a less than satisfactory nature-based recreation experience on the part of this interviewee. That they know what they are "in for" suggests acceptance that there will be crowds at this recreation place. This, alongside descriptions of it "getting more and more crowded" suggests expectations of continued increased growth and consequent further reduced satisfaction levels. However, the participant also stated they do not mind this, which indicates a level of rationalisation is taking place for the participant. They appear to be some way along a continuum involving a re-characterisation of this destination from 'wilderness' to 'semi-wilderness' (or other). As Manning and Valliere (2001) described, this is one of a number of coping strategies employed by recreationists when the characteristics of the recreation resource undergo change; in this instance, product shift. For this participant, the 'product' (i.e., the experience at this place) has 'shifted' from being free from crowds, to being crowded.



Figure 6. Trampers descending Castle Hill Peak (image S. Espiner, 2020)

While many participants presented their observations of increased tourist numbers with no subjective assessment, it was evident from the data that overseas visitors are both welcomed and resented; ultimately, it appears to be an area of conflict for nature-based recreationists. They want to simultaneously showcase their area to visitors and retain the access and experiences they have traditionally had. Similarly, they feel as though there is plenty of room for them and for visitors to experience the outdoors, yet they fear that this may change. The next section outlines the different ways in which interview participants characterised tourists and tourism.

5.2 Perspectives on tourism

Research into perspectives on tourism has largely focussed on the perspectives of residents. We shift this focus from residential communities to communities of shared interest in outdoor recreation. In this section, the nature-based recreationists interviewed discuss tourism in both the context of its value to New Zealand, and in regard to how it impacts on their recreation experience.

5.2.1 Positive impressions

Participants in many cases spoke in positive ways about tourism in general, and of tourism specific to the Selwyn District. There was broad support for increasing tourist numbers to the district, often on the basis of participants' beliefs about the economic benefits of tourism. Generalised statements included: "tourism is always good, like for small businesses and things like that" (P10), "it's just fantastic, I think it's really good for the area" (P3), and the simple "yes" (P11) in response to the direct question "do you think that international tourism is generally beneficial for Selwyn?".

Some participants noted that a number of businesses are oriented towards visitors who engage in nature-based recreation in Selwyn. This was particularly the case with the annual Coast to Coast multisport event, around which a number of businesses are based (e.g., guiding companies which specialise in mountain running and kayaking). One participant stated that tourism is "actually quite a big part of our economy", and went on to say:

We want that because we want to have a good economy and we want to have lots of visitors and all of that kind of stuff. But we need to be very careful to manage the pressure on the resources, because we can't just have a million people turn up (P9).

This type of 'hedging', where participants present an overall positive impression of tourism immediately followed by descriptions of its risks, was frequently present in interviews. This type of commentary suggests that interview participants are near the beginning of Doxey's (1975) 'Irridex' while in Butler's (1975) model, they display negative/passive attitudes. Commentary indicated that tourists are viewed as a useful mechanism for local economic development, and hints at an understanding that there will be negative consequences associated with "a million people turning

up”.

Interview participants were asked directly about the ways in which tourism benefitted them or the places they go to pursue their recreation activity. In the majority of cases, responses were long-considered, and when prompted to respond, the following aspects were raised. People approved of facilities maintenance or installation, such as toilets at Arthur’s Pass; they were positive about the potential that recreational resources (such as backcountry huts and walking trails) would be maintained; and, two participants stated they would benefit from the potential creation of new trails or tracks in the Craigieburn area (specifically a shared-use mountain bike trail (P2) and a looped walk with hut accommodation (P12). They agreed that increased interest in and use of the area (i.e., by tourists) might accelerate the process of upgrading facilities. However, participants were generally slow and somewhat reticent in responding to questions about whether tourism had improved their recreation experience. The following exchange illustrates this, in response to the interviewer question: Can you think of any benefits from tourism to yourself as a recreation user in Selwyn, is there anything that tourism adds to your experience?

P12: Oh. [long pause] Obviously nothing has come straight to mind. There’s some infrastructure things. You can see the toilets are better and more prevalent than they used to be.

Responses were in accordance with other research that has found that people are more supportive of additional tourism in an area if they perceive that they benefit personally from tourism (McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Shariff, 2020). Because the stakeholders interviewed were selected for their status primarily as recreation enthusiasts, as such they were not necessarily in positions to directly benefit from increases in tourism numbers (e.g., as tourism operators might be).

Responses indicate that there is reticence about international tourism which was particularly visible when it came to recreation in nature-based settings. There was little in the way of direct benefits that the participants could easily identify. In this context, tourism was tolerated rather than celebrated. For example, after speaking of international tourists having a sense of entitlement - “the word out there is they have this sense of entitlement”(P8) - a participant went on immediately to state that “all the foreigners that we come across here in the Selwyn District...have a passion for the outdoors and are enjoying it”. This represents an acceptance of the right of the tourists to be there, but also acknowledges visitors as a source of irritation on some occasions. Reluctance to raise criticisms about tourists can in part be explained by fear among participants in appearing xenophobic. Even so, several people were critical of specific effects they viewed resulting from tourism, one of which was the impact of free independent travellers on the places they visit.

5.2.2 Negative impressions

Free independent travellers (FITs) were regarded with a degree of disdain which was primarily based on the belief that this form of travel contributes little in terms of economic value. Again, this is consistent with findings around support for tourism being contingent on there being tangible benefits (McGehee & Andereck, 2004). In the context of freedom camping at Coes Ford, one participant felt that the resources available to FITs should attract a fee and directly stated so: “we should charge them” (P14). This was around the provision of an overnight camping or vehicle site, drinking water and toilets at no cost, as well as that the nearby river is used for swimming. They noted that in the summer months the site is very popular. The participant had also observed tourists using free wi-fi at local libraries; they validated their commentary around this by noting their own status as a ratepayer (payments of which in part go towards the running costs of the public library and Coes Ford).

Participants’ status as taxpayers was raised in other interviews, usually alongside discussion around the idea of tourists getting what was characterised as a ‘free ride’. Negative feelings toward tourists appears to be at least partly contingent on that they are not perceived to have contributed sufficient financial resources to the backcountry infrastructure they are using. Thus, returning to Doxey’s Irridex, we can characterise the previously quoted participant’s attitude towards tourists within the apathetic/irritation stage (see Fig. 3). The perception was prevalent that some international visitors get disproportionate benefits for the amount they contribute. Although differential pricing operates in regards to angling licences (Fish and Game, 2020) and the more popular of the Great Walks (Department of Conservation, 2020), the backcountry hut network is accessible for New Zealand residents and visitors alike with the purchase of hut passes, including the option of an annual pass. The following participant noted that although they themselves use an annual hut pass to pre-pay accommodation in DOC huts, their use of huts is sporadic, while:

Some tourists, they don’t pay anything, they get a yearly pass, season pass, and they might be using it pretty much every day for 6 months. And it doesn’t seem to me that it’s a great contribution (P5).

This imbalance was noted alongside other apparent injustices by interview participants. As noted by Wray et al. (2010) the backcountry is a cherished aspect of tramping in New Zealand, and local users view its use, including that of backcountry huts, as bound by cultural norms, the nature of which are learned gradually over time. It was difficult for some participants to see the backcountry hut system taken for granted by people whose experience of it was fleeting. One participant described their impression that visitors lack knowledge of customary practices associated with the use of huts. They had no malice towards visitors, but speculated that those on a tight walking schedule were not

spending time in the early evening in huts as walk-in-walk-out or short-trip trampers might, and so were not aware of or concerned with 'domestic' hut tasks that are usually understood to be a duty of those staying. (One possible explanation for this is that visitors' previous experience of backcountry accommodation both in NZ with the Great Walks, or in their home countries, involved huts serviced by rangers.) In this participant's example, international visitors on the Te Araroa Trail had used firewood, but had not chopped or restocked supplies for the next hut users.



Figure 7. Mountain bikes outside a backcountry hut (image H. Southcott, 2019)

One participant stated that while the majority of overseas visitors in tramping huts were pleasant and considerate there is tension between users. Fig. 7 shows a backcountry hut within the study area, the small size of which makes clear the need for cooperative behaviour (as well as indicating changes to traditional use of the tracks which connect such huts, with the introduction of mountain bikes). In relation to overseas walkers using huts on the Te Araroa Trail, one participant stated:

...you get others that just come in, and they treat it like their own personal space, you know, it's sometimes a bit disappointing. And some of our members are a little bit vocal in making sure they've paid their hut fees, which is sometimes a bit awkward (P5).

Te Araroa Trail was commented on directly by over a third of those interviewed. In all cases it was identified as having the potential to disrupt the experience of nature-based recreationists in its Selwyn section. People had the impression that the majority of users were international, and that they are people who, rather than having a connection with the place, are more focussed on

completion of the trail or the section they are walking. This style of tramping was referred to disparagingly in two instances, once as a “bucket list” (P5) activity, and in the other as a “tick-box” (P8) activity.

One participant, an experienced trumper employed in the tourism sector, made the following comment about international Te Araroa walkers:

Most of them...won't stay in huts unless they can stay in free huts...we did talk to some [DOC] rangers at Hamilton Hut and they said they are problematic because they often get out in Arthur's Pass and go into Christchurch and they come back and then they, you know, they've bought themselves some shitty Warehouse sleeping bag and they just leave that in the hut. You know, they leave shit behind (P8).

Because of the popularity of Te Araroa Trail, and the impression from interview participants that international user-numbers will continue to increase, it is reasonable to expect that the adaptive behaviours outlined next will continue to be employed by regular users to even greater extents. This sentiment is expressed by the following participant who had been talking about avoiding New Zealand's most popular walks “like the Milford and the Routeburn”; in their justification of this statement, they went on to explain that these walks have:

...too many people. I mean, we've got such a stunning country, I don't think there's any need to share it with 40 other people walking in exactly the same direction on the same path (P8).

A large proportion of the interview participants were accepting of tourism in Selwyn and even displayed excitement to varying degrees about potential economic benefits from this sector. Equally, however, there was reticence and fear that tourism will encroach on their ability to carry out recreation practices in the ways that they have traditionally done. In fact, although participants rarely acknowledged openly that their recreation behaviour has changed due to increases in tourism, analysis of their perspectives suggests that many were adapting recreation behaviours in response to this phenomenon.

5.3 Adaptive behaviours

During the course of interviews, participants revealed that some of their personal recreation behaviours had changed as a result of experiencing increased numbers of users in nature-based recreation sites. As described above, participants stated they had observed increased tourist numbers in the course of their recreation (and daily) habits in the Selwyn District. Therefore, it can be expected that adaptive behaviours are, in part, a result of the increase in international visitors at nature-based recreation sites.

When asked directly about whether or not tourism-related factors influence participants' decisions about where to recreate, they rarely responded affirmatively. However, the use of probing questions and further discussion revealed that some participants do avoid certain places, while others have adapted in a number of other ways to the changing tourism landscape.

Displacement as one adaptive behaviour has been widely discussed in recreation literature (Greenaway et al., 2007); three forms of which were present in the interview data. These were, temporal displacement, whereby recreationists alter the time at which they visit a given site; activity displacement, whereby participants change the type of activity performed at a given location; and, spatial displacement, whereby participants avoid certain areas, favouring other places where the conditions meet their expectations. There was no evidence of absolute displacement in the data (whereby participants cease to use a location altogether).

5.3.1 Temporal displacement

One of the clearest examples of temporal displacement was from a participant who stated that while in training for the Coast to Coast adventure race they had "never experienced trails being so busy or any of these areas being so busy that it would put me off". Almost immediately they followed up that, now that they were no longer in training, they "wouldn't go through Goat Pass on a sunny Saturday in summer time for the fun of it because I'd know it would be full of people" (P1). As well as talking directly about displacement, this participant's words highlight that the choice of nature-based setting is dependent on what the person wants to get from the trip. This is what Manning (2011), and others, have described as outdoor recreation being 'multi-motivated'. In this case, the participant viewed using a well-used nature-based setting for training as appropriate, but in other instances they would not choose that recreation setting. Hence, they displace temporally (summer, the weekend, during the day) and spatially (Goat Pass) when engaging in informal recreation.

This type of commentary indicates the complexities involved in decision-making, and the number of variables impacting on recreationists' choices. Alongside the number of people anticipated to be there, other factors participants identified as influencing their decision-making around where to go included: attractiveness/familiarity of the destination, weather, access, the level to which they wanted to exert themselves, the timeframe available to them, and, the preferences of their companions. These factors are consistent with the little literature that exists around decision making related to choice of nature-based recreation site. Other examples of temporal displacement included people who depart early for day trips in Arthur's Pass National Park to avoid weekend traffic. However, this action could also be attributed to time pressure.

5.3.2 Activity displacement

A further adaptive behaviour again raised the issue of hut usage; participants who used huts (this included trampers, mountaineers, an angler, and a four-wheel driver) in almost all cases stated they carried their own shelter when on overnight trips. Although in some cases this was due to personal preferences around privacy or not wanting to 'take over' a hut when travelling with a group, in the majority of cases it was due to either a preference for peace and quiet or to be prepared in the event that the hut was full. When asked whether or not they take a tent when tramping, one participant responded:

Fifteen years ago I probably wouldn't have. But I probably took slightly more risks as well then, so I would go lighter and not bring a tent and assume there would be space in the hut. Now I would always bring a tent (P12).

Another respondent, a mountain biker/tramper, when asked if they carried a tent when on overnight tramps, stated that they did: "certainly at weekends, these days quite a few of them are getting busier". They went on to explain:

Maybe I'm older and grumpier and not so keen on squeezing up, so if I've got a lightweight tent that I can throw in my pack and if that's full just come outside and it's all good (P2).

It was clear that, for walkers and trampers in particular, the abundance of nature-based recreation places in Selwyn afforded recreationists a number of suitable locations in which to carry out their activity. However, this was not the case for activities requiring specific land formations or conditions, such as rock climbing/bouldering. This group of recreationists circumvented the issue of less than satisfactory conditions at their favoured site using temporal or spatial displacement.

5.3.3 Spatial displacement

Four interview participants identified bouldering or rock climbing as an activity in which they participated, and noted Castle Hill/Kura Tawhiti as an ideal location for this activity. One person noted that, so distinctive are the rock formations there, it is internationally renowned as a bouldering destination. The limestone rock formations have long been used by day-trippers, walkers and rock climbers, but its popularity has grown in recent years. While a 1999 New Zealand Geographic article proclaimed it was "not unusual to see a dozen cars parked at the roadside while their occupants take their skills to the rockface" (Walrond, 1999), today there is an expansive gravel parking area, information panel, and toilet block to accommodate visitors. DOC visitor counters show that visitor numbers have increased steadily in the last decade to over 110,000 annually (Department of Conservation, 2019). Because of the lack of comparable alternatives Castle Hill/Kura

Tawhiti is frequently used by rock climbers whose activities take place alongside visiting tourists. One regular visitor to Kura Tawhiti for bouldering described surprise in finding themselves the subject of a visitors' photograph. When asked if that bothered them, they replied:

Oh not really, but it changes the atmosphere of it a bit. Especially when you, and you do intentionally maybe try and pick some [rock faces] that are maybe not right on that main path where you have people just traipsing past you all the time (P13).

This participant described spatial displacement within one location, they also reported displacing to a separate location altogether. Flock Hill reportedly has similar opportunities for rock climbers, but given that access is over private land, permission is needed prior to a trip. This reportedly limits possibilities for spontaneity. Even so, one person felt it was a good alternative, stating "from a rock climbing point of view it's easy enough to get away from the crowds by going there for example instead of going to Kura Tawhiti" (P2). The same person was happy for Kura Tawhiti to be one of few sites to attract large visitor numbers, they referred it as the "honeypot" (P2) of the area, and was pleased that the site's popularity meant other nearby sites were left tourist-free. This is significant, because although they had previously enjoyed Castle Hill as a site for bouldering and day visits, the popularity of Castle Hill was framed as satisfactory. This is another example of Manning and Valliere's (2001) cognitive coping strategy, rationalisation, used in this instance to re-characterise the conditions at a recreation site from unsatisfactory to satisfactory. In the re-characterisation process, the local user is able to retain both a satisfactory recreation experience (in another, not crowded location), and positive feelings about this.

In addition to displacement as a result of crowds, two participants raised the issue of the recreation resource itself being degraded by over-use, and this potentially becoming a contributing factor to changes in use by local recreationists. This was certainly the case for the rock climber who noted that the rock formations at Castle Hill/Kura Tawhiti were in some cases smoothed to the point where climbing was made difficult (P13). In addition, the Selwyn section of Te Araroa Trail was viewed as being at risk of degradation from over use, as one participant explained:

I go over Harper Pass every year and I've definitely seen impact there...Right along the way, where the Te Araroa goes, it runs into little areas of bottle necks - quite heavily used areas... along popular routes. And it's causing issues (P12).

The participant went on to state that they were "very aware of what the cumulative impact is of lots of individuals and groups". Several areas within Arthur's Pass National Park were identified as becoming busier with visitors, and as problematic for this reason.

In addition to Goat Pass (previously discussed), Avalanche Peak was raised several times as a place that has experienced significant increases in visitor numbers; it was referred to as “quite busy” (P5), “really popular now” (P13), and “you’re going to find a lot of people there” (P12). It was agreed by participants that tourists make up a proportion of the increased traffic there. Fig. 8 shows a tramper enjoying a view of Avalanche Peak from the Bealey Track. The following participants described their intention to avoid returning to Avalanche Peak; one self-described ‘weekend warrior’ - a person employed during the week who recreates on the weekend - stated “if you do have your day to go and walk up at Arthur’s Pass, I’m not going to select Avalanche Peak” (P13). Another participant explicitly noted their feelings about the proliferation of other recreationists present at that site:



Figure 8. Bealey Track looking to Avalanche Peak (image D. Murphy, 2020)

That could be one that is a bit off-putting because of all of the people, because it’s really narrow at the top and you can, you know, you’ve gotta wait for people to come up and down. And I think it’s one that everybody wants to do, you know, but I probably wouldn’t do it again (P5).

Arthur’s Pass Village and its nearby short walks were viewed as key tourism sites, however disparaging people were of its facilities. One person openly criticised the town as a “bit of a shithole really... it’s just really somewhere to sleep and park your car” (P6). Their view was that it was a town for tourists to pass through or to have a short stay. Another agreed that the town was to be avoided on account of tourist numbers, they stated they would “definitely avoid the little day walks in the village cos you’re tripping over tourists in there. And the village itself gets pretty hectic” (P4).

The findings show clear indication of nature-based recreationists displacing from certain sites within the Selwyn District. Their adaptive practices align with personal attitudes to tourism that are on a spectrum from excitement about tourism, to tolerance of and irritation by tourists. The range of sometimes conflicting perspectives participants had on tourism and tourists represents tensions

which point to where Selwyn sits so far as tourist development is concerned; as a relatively undeveloped tourist destination, Selwyn has yet to reap the full economic benefits of tourism, and, equally, it has yet to feel the full burden of overtourism that other destinations experience.

6. Concluding discussion

The Selwyn District constitutes an ideal location to meet the objectives of the research. Its abundance of recreation sites which suit a range of recreation activities and its increasing visitor numbers mark it as a region in which adaptive practices are, and will continue to be deployed by local nature-based recreationists.

Participants consistently observed increases in numbers of people using the places in which they recreate. A range of sometimes contradictory attitudes were expressed in relation to increasing visitor numbers, and although these attitudes to some extent align with the existing tourism literature, the conceptual models offered by Doxey (1975) and Butler (1975) do not fully account for the range of attitudes expressed in the current study. That attitudes were sometimes incongruous indicates the complex and nuanced nature of factors at play (as well as complexities within social/psychological processing). For example, interview participants at times expressed trepidation about increasing visitor numbers and frustration at tourist behaviours; these sentiments came alongside great pride in their country and region and a genuine willingness to host visitors. Thus, the unidirectional progression suggested by Doxey (1975), which eventually culminates in antagonism towards tourists, does not accurately represent the scope of attitudes of the more diffuse recreation user communities in this study. It does, however, capture a valid 'snapshot' in time of attitudes towards tourism. Thus, the results support the hypothesis of Butler (1975), whose model (Fig. 4) recognises the co-existence of a myriad of attitudes, and that these are often expressed in passive ways. Additionally, the relationship between 'attitude' and 'action' is bridged in this study with findings that show adaptive practices, including displacement, are occurring.

Local nature-based recreationists celebrated tourism as a contributor to local and national economies, but they did not want to see the places they use overrun with visitors. This is consistent with attitudinal findings on tourism development where it has been found that local users of a place (usually residents) tolerate tourism more when it benefits them directly (Shariff, 2020). It remains to be seen whether or not expectations of continued regional economic growth from tourism in the Selwyn District will be met. Notwithstanding the positive view that nature-based recreationists may have of the economic benefits to the region from tourism, the majority of interview participants were not in positions to directly benefit, so, as expected, their attitudes to increases in tourism were not consistently positive.

While overtourism was feared, the Selwyn District was predominantly viewed as currently immune to this phenomenon, at least in the short term. There was the perception from interview participants that Selwyn as a rural farming region, is not oriented towards or provisioned for

tourism. Participants spoke of the existence of lesser-known nature-based recreation places that were cherished by locals, giving the impression that tourists, in great numbers at least, would not be welcomed there. In addition, the ways in which these places were talked about also points to their being viewed as a dwindling resource, significant for the limited number of places suitable for some recreation activities within Selwyn.

Other tourist destinations were frequently contrasted with Selwyn, with interview participants making the point that places such as Queenstown have more established tourist infrastructure, which, coupled with their existing popularity and iconic status, draw high visitor numbers leaving Selwyn relatively visitor-free in comparison. This concept of a 'tourist honeypot' was also applied within the Selwyn District, with popular Castle Hill/Kura Tawhiti framed in a positive light in this context: its popularity meant for some recreationists that other places nearby remained relatively tourist free.

Within this fairly relaxed attitude about tourism, albeit due in part to rationalisation strategies being deployed, there was the view that although there are more visitors now, and that these people can and have encroached on the nature-based recreation of locals, there is room for everyone. The preference was for fewer people in the places that people recreate, but the conclusion from the majority of participants was that numbers would have to be overwhelming to prompt intentional displacement. Even so, certain sites were identified as having reached capacity, and thus, are avoided by some local recreationists. This applied to Avalanche Peak, several short walks near Arthur's Pass, and Castle Hill/Kura Tawhiti. Glimpses of displacement were seen in discussion around Te Araroa Trail; discussion around recreation and tourism in this particular setting was more animated and more pejorative than was the commentary around other Selwyn nature-based recreation sites. The popularity of this walk with international visitors points to this recreation site as having the potential to engender displacement, or even conflict in future. Interview participants were concerned about this attraction's ability to withstand increased pressure from visitors and simultaneously retain the same level of appeal for local users. Consequently, Te Araroa Trail is poised to become a New Zealand backcountry attraction whose visitor-numbers risk detracting from the very remote recreation experience being sought.

Significantly, initial denials of displacement were superseded in conversation with descriptions of displacement that were entirely consistent with definitions seen in the literature (Robert E Manning & Valliere, 2001). Participants reported avoiding their preferred nature-based recreation places at certain times (of the day, week and year) and changing their recreation activities, or the ways in which these are carried out, dependent on their expectations of how many other people would be

there. The relatively blasé ways in which these adaptive practices were reported shows that the cognitive coping strategy of rationalisation is being deployed to such an extent that some were not cognizant of the ways in which their recreation behaviours had already changed due to tourism. The findings show conclusively that a range of adaptive strategies are being used by nature-based recreationists in the Selwyn District.

This multi-phased approach (of which this report constitutes phase II) represents a pragmatic way to gain both breadth and depth across recreation activities in nature-based settings in one region.

When considered in conjunction with reports I and III of this series, this research contributes to the building of a comprehensive picture of the ways in which nature-based recreationists are adapting to an evolving tourist landscape. Furthermore, there is scope for additional research projects targeting other New Zealand regions; the undertaking of which would go some way towards enabling a comprehensive nationwide picture to be built up over time.

Postscript

This research was undertaken in late 2019, prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 and resultant restrictions on international and domestic travel. At the time of writing, restrictions on domestic travel have been relaxed, and various initiatives designed to activate domestic tourism have been implemented. For example, tourism body ChristchurchNZ launched the 'Pivot to Domestic' campaign in the immediate post-lockdown period in May 2020 (ChristchurchNZ, 2020), and, Tourism NZ launched the 'Do something new, New Zealand' (Tourism New Zealand, 2020) to encourage domestic tourism. The post-COVID period provides 'breathing space' to reimagine international tourism in the regions as well as representing an opportunity for locals to reconnect with their local areas in ways they perhaps had not before.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview schedule

Theme 1: Profile

- Where do you **live**? **How long** have you lived there?
- What is your **outdoor story**? (tell me about your relationship with the outdoors)

Theme 2: Group/organisation

- Type of group, membership (e.g., numbers, 'type', approximate ages/stages, consistency of membership)
- Role within group/organisation (e.g., how long?, level of involvement)
- Is the group social, strictly focussed around outdoor recreation, in/formal? [show map]
- Where does the group go to do _____ (location) (i.e., tell me about where you go when you do _____)
- How does the group decide where to go?
- Do you have a best/favourite spot to go? (Why are they the best?)
- How does the group make decisions about where to _____?
- How long have you been going there?
- What times of the day/week/month does the group get together to _____?
- Why are these times/days etc. best?

Theme 3: Outdoor recreation over time

- Do you come across many **other people** there? What are they doing? (how do you know they are sightseeing/also training, or whatever it is they are doing?)
- What was it like when you first started going to _____ for _____?
- What is it like now?
- Have you or the group changed the place or the ways you carry out your outdoor recreation activity over time?
 - o Possible prompts: is there somewhere you used to go but now don't?
 - o Ways you used to operate/plan/do things but now don't?
- Have you noticed any **changes** over time in the way places are used for _____?
 - o In your experience of outdoor recreation sites in Selwyn, have you ever encountered anything that might deter you from returning to that place in future? (e.g., more/fewer people, better/worse paths/parking, more litter, any other activities using the same location(s), and commercial/tourist groups using location(s)?)
 - o How have these changes/conditions impacted your recreation? (probe for problems / advantages)
 - o How do you feel about these **conditions**?
- What would the people you go with say about these changes _____?
- Do they talk about these issues/topics much?
- Is there enthusiasm from the group/organisation members about changes they have seen to the places they _____?

Theme 4: Broader tourism questions

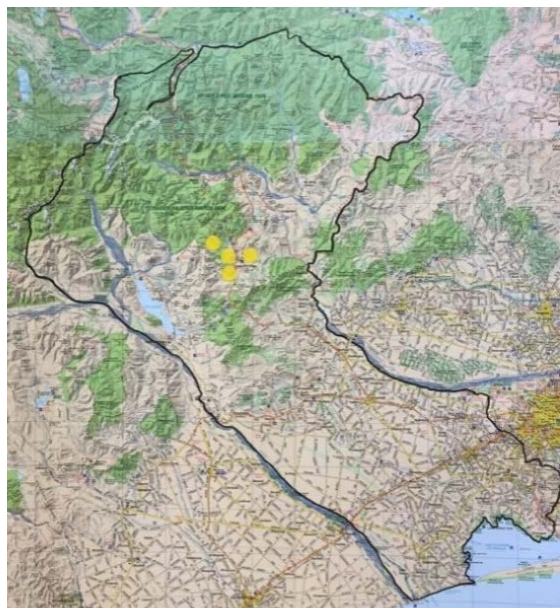
- Do you get the impression that **tourists** use the places you do for _____?
- Has this changed the experience for you at all?
- Do you think international tourism has helped outdoor recreation in Selwyn?

Appendix 2: Participants' favoured nature-based recreation sites and activities

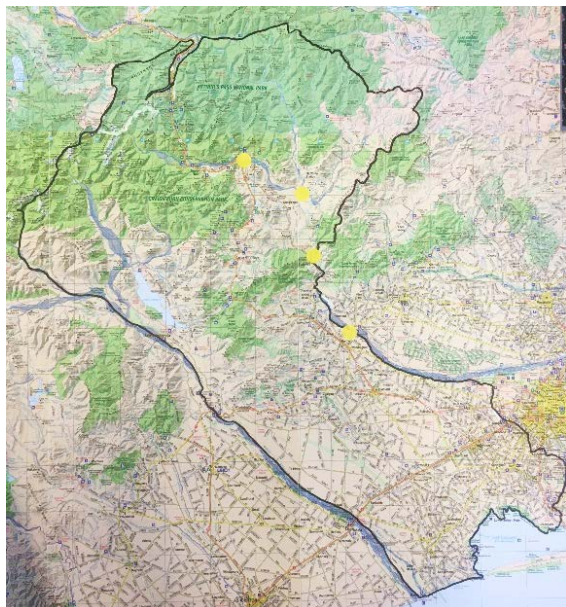
Participant 1: trail runner, kayaker



Participant 2: mountain biker, trumper



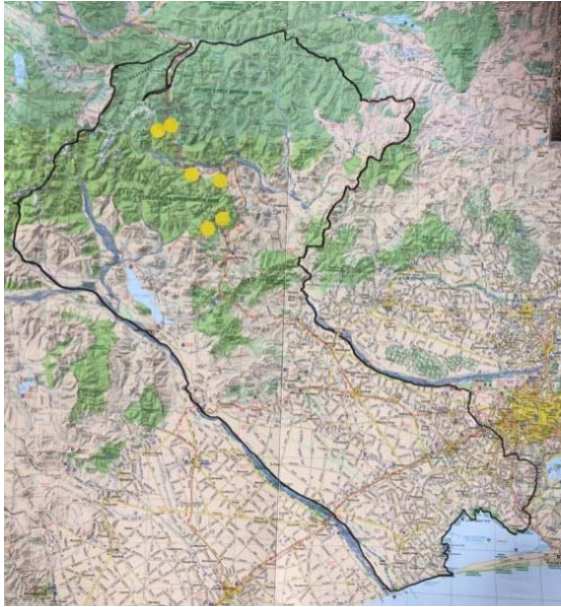
Participant 3: kayaker



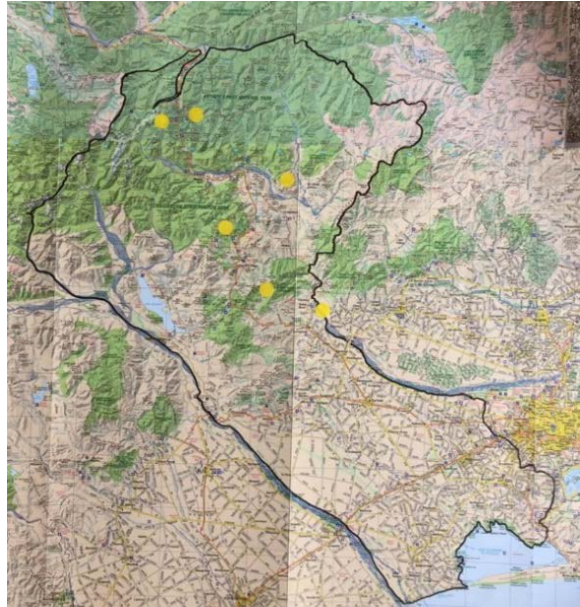
Participant 4: trumper, day trumper



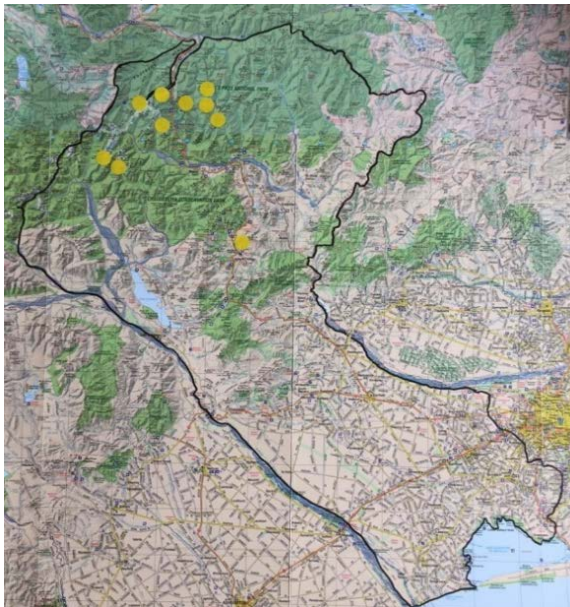
Participant 5: day tramper



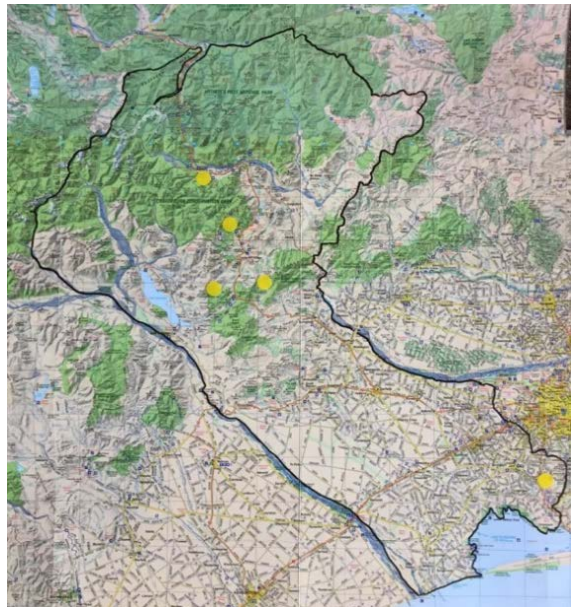
Participant 6: tramper, mountaineer, trail runner, kayaker



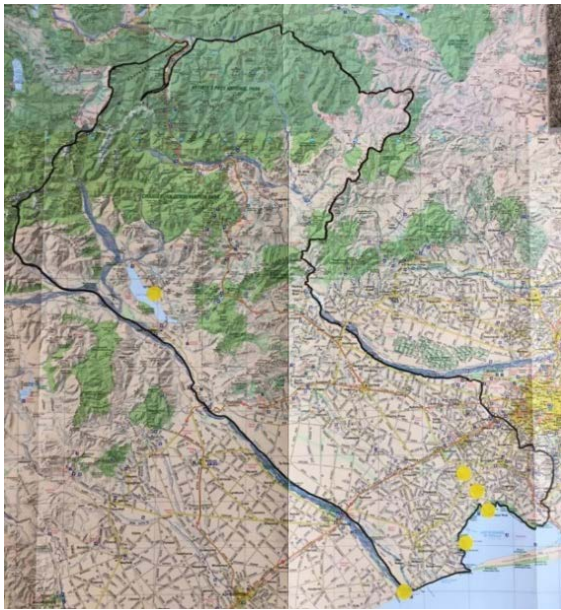
Participant 7: mountaineer, alpine tramper, trail runner, boulderer



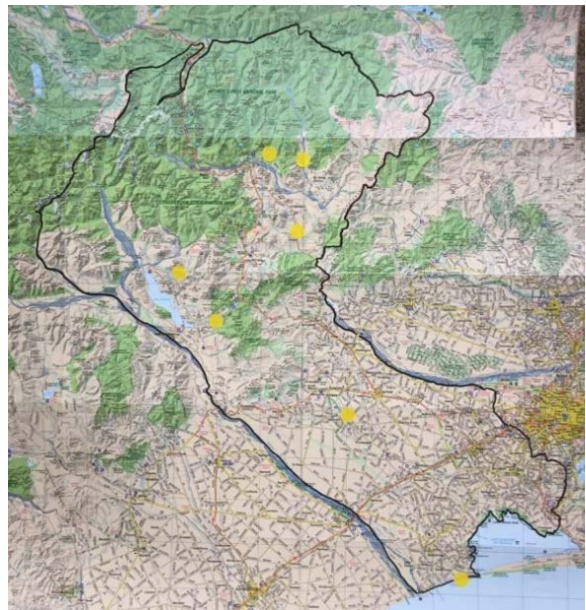
Participant 8: tramper, Rogainer, trail runner, mountain biker



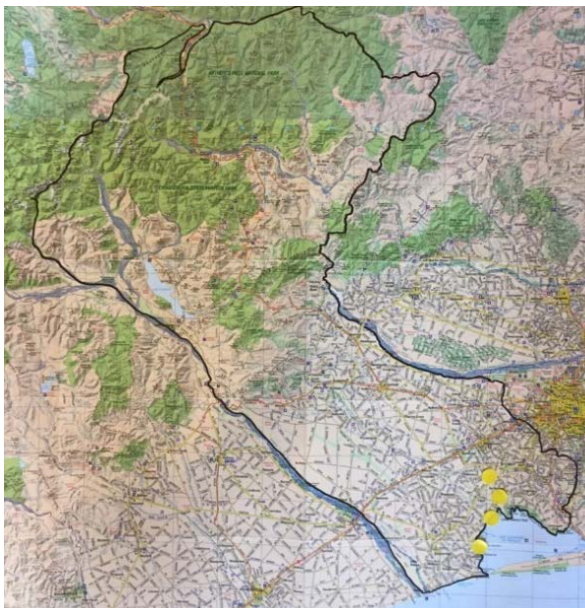
Participant 9: angler, game bird shooter, hunter



Participant 10: 4-wheel driver



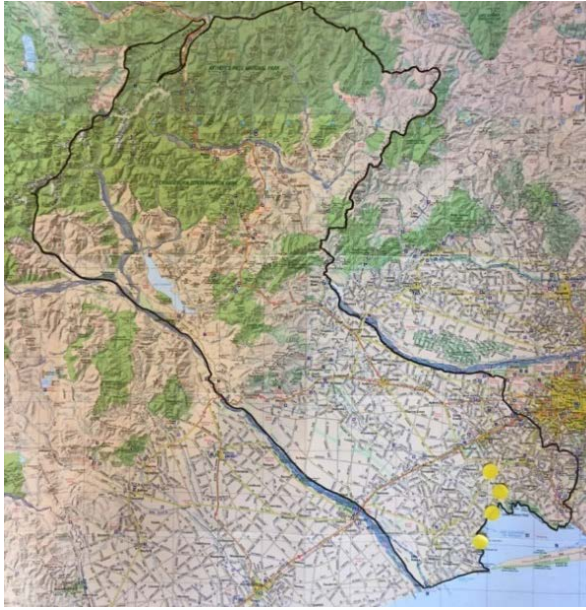
Participant 11: game bird shooter,
conservationist



Participant 13: rock climber, tramper



Participant 14: day trumper



Note: there is no image for participant 12, whose outdoor recreation activities were tramping and back-country skiing

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